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## OPEN CITY IN SEOUL: COEXISTENCE, FUSION, AND CREATION

**Kwon Jong Yoo**

*Chung-Ang University, Korea*

This article has a target that shows the history of Seoul city with its features about coexistence, fusion, and creation. It is not difficult to understand that Seoul city in its long history keeps various aspects of changes of the city appearance and people's lives. Its long history also has incubated various contexts of culture, religions, and ideologies. It is natural that each of various contexts exchanged and intersected and thus created a new context that has been unusual in the past, even though many conflicts between each different culture are inevitable.

Open City describes the concept that city has not only an open structure of space as well as system of co-existence and communications among many different cultures, religions, or

ideologies. And the mixture produced by the co-existing people's ideas and cultures make more constructive context of common lives in the city. In such meaning Seoul City is worth being told about its openness. This paper will tell about the history and important events or changes of the city and look for the meaning of the open city.

If the Open City project looks for a desirable model of an open city in foreseeable future, research on context of each targeted city is necessarily required because there is no better source than our experience or retrospection on the experience. It is supposed that we should answer two kinds of request. The first requires to figure out what the open city was in the past, or what can be said as 'open' in the city in the past time. The second is to clarify what the open city in the future should or could realize.

But finally all discussions about open city of every location will meet together to organize a more comprehensive or integrated concept of open city, in other words, conceptualization of open city, that will work to shift another city to an open city. It does mean to need an endless conversation between history and future, especially because a city in its history is, in fact, a context of its citizens' lives. Therefore development of a city toward open city must be discussed based on the context which have been shifting until now and will be shifting to the future. In order for a successful project of the Open City, we watch the past time with our eyes but at the same time imagine or design the future in our mind.

In this article three items will be introduced; Seoul's 621 year history as the Capital of Korea, Coexisting cultures and ideological conflicts, and creation for future city with cultural prosperity. These items are considered in order to show continual shifts of cultures or civilizations in Seoul city and contribute to the conceptualization of the open city by adding the details of Seoul city the past and the future.

### **1. Seoul's history starting as the Capital of Joseon Dynasty of Korea**

Seoul is a city that has a long history especially as a capital of Joseon Dynasty(1392-1910) and Modern Republic of

Korea(1948- ). Between the two period it used to be the capital of Japanese colony(1910-1945) in Korean Peninsula and under rule of military army politics of the U.S.A(1945-1948). Joseon Dynasty was established as a result of a bloodless revolution against Koryo Dynasty(918-1392). The revolution had been planned and practiced by a Neo-Confucian scholar, Jeong, Do-jeon(1342-1398) who had supported General Yi, Seong-gye(1335-1408) to ascend the throne. Even though beside them were many other supporters or cooperative figures, but General Yi and Confucian scholar Jeong are thought to be the most important because the revolution was planned and realized by both of them.

If so, we should pay attention to Jeong's activities. Jeong, after success of the revolution, was graded to the first meritorious retainer and appointed the prime minister. Two years after successful revolution, the First King, former General Yi, decided to transfer the capital to Seoul from Gaegyeong where used be the capital of Koryo Dynasty located in the north from Seoul. The First King made Prime Minister Jeong plan all the things from transference of the location to design of the new city.

Seoul which had been a small town became, in 1394, the capital of Joseon Dynast with newly constructed royal palaces, public office buildings, city walls and gates, and many kinds of social infrastructure. But the more important thing we must pay attention to is that the capital was renewed space for ruling the people under the Confucian political ideology. While Koryo Dynasty ruled its people with combinations of three political ideologies; Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, but the new Dynasty adopted the Confucianism as the only and absolute ideology in order for its achievement of Confucian ideal kingdom. The Confucianism was the Neo-Confucianism that kept a elaborated metaphysics and practical ethics coupled with detailed rituals. Why the Dynasty adopted the Neo-Confucianism as its ruling ideology lies in the fact that Buddhism in the former Dynasty was excluded as the corrupted ideology and ignored as neither available as a ruling ideology nor civilizing its people any more. Prime Minister Jeong designed the capital city to be the center for reformation all the ways of people's living under

the rule of the Dynasty. The reformation was of course based on renewal of political system and improvement of land system, but at the same time went along with creation of spaces that were named according to important ideas of Confucianism as well as reformation of rituals and education. Therefore the reformation was very comprehensive and effective not only to reform the national law and economy but also to civilize the people's consciousness as well as their routine to discard Buddhist rituals or consciousness and follow the Confucian principle. Hereby we learn Korean people's ancestors have been civilized by Confucian rituals and ethics during the Joseon Dynasty.

## **2. Coexisting cultures and Conflicts between Ideologies**

However, during the Joseon Dynasty the capital had been the space of co-existence of various traditions not only of the Confucian civilization but also of Buddhism and Shamanism mixed with Daoism until the 17th century. Even though the ideologies except the Confucianism were ruled out as heresies, but the traditions of such religions deeply rooted into the routine of the people. Since the 17th century European learning and technologies expanded its population with Seoul as the center. At that time Catholicism has been generated and developed by some spontaneous Korean Confucian scholars. In the 19th century Protestantism landed and increased its Korean population. And many new religious movements including Donghak, Jeungsangyo, Won Buddhism, and Daejonggyo which have developed religious nationality or identity of Korean people to respond against expansion of Catholicism and Protestantism.

During the first two hundreds years after establishment of the Joseon Dynasty the capital was the space for co-existence not only of Confucianism but also of Buddhism, Daoism, and Shamanism. But since the 17th century the members of co-existence increased to involve group of the Asian traditional cultures and European new ones together. During these two periods many times of persecution or oppression by ruling ideology, that is Confucianism, or conflicts among them were inevitable. In addition in the 19th century the Joseon Dynasty had been exposed to threats of military provocations and commercial

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request of Western European countries that would expand their markets and material suppliers in the country. But the Dynasty had adhered to close-door policy until agreement of treaty under threat of Japan in 1876. After then to the end of the Dynasty the context of Western civilization has been increased under the slogan of enlightenment. During that time many intellectuals and officials went abroad for their learning of new European and American civilizations.

In 1910, the Dynasty was deprived of the sovereignty by Japanese Imperialism. The Japanese Imperialism planted lots of modern system that were necessary to effectively exploit resources in Korea, and persistently criticized the traditional civilizations of Korean people to weaken or even absorb Korean people's spirit of resistance. Their criticism against the Korean people's traditional religions or learning accompanied with modern humanities learned from the Western Europe.

Japanese militarism that degenerated from the imperialism was finally defeated by American-Soviet Russian Allied Force in 1945. At the same time Korean people were liberated and approached to the chance to establish an independent country. But division occupation of the Korean Peninsular by the two victorious countries, the U.S.A. and the Soviet Russia, finally invited to divide two countries via the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. From 1945 to 1948, Seoul was the space in which capitalist ideology and communist one co-exist and made competition each other.

Since 1948 when an independent government was established Seoul has been the capital of the Republic of Korea and has gone through many changes for more than 60 years. The most impressive change is to have gotten over ruin of the Korean War and successfully constructed a very modernized city. Decisive factor of the success is believed the consistent industrialization during 1960s and 1970s.

We watched in this time of industrialization a new style of conflicts between traditional rituals and newly established routine of people's lives in the industrialization. The industrialization had pushed forward by the military junta. In 1970s and 1980s when the military junta reinforced its governance called

as authoritarianism government, Seoul city used to be the space where frequent conflicts between the authoritarianism government and antigovernment movements.

The antigovernment movements started from simple criticism and struggles against the government but gradually expanded their ideological spectra involving communist ideology or even North Korea's Juche Idea during 1970s through 1990s. This kind of conflicts, at that time, showed up a kind of political conflict between despotic government and anti-despotism, but now another political conflict between new rights and leftists settled in the city goes on.

### **3. Creation for Future City with Cultural Prosperity in the Future**

We can see another facet of the capital city of Korea. The capital city has functioned as spaces for harmony, unity, and creation by networking and communications among different groups or peoples especially from 1980s through 2010s. During the years there have been a lot of events or phenomena which showed the city functioned as open space.

For example, most Korean people who are older than 40s remember a big historical event that the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) planned and realized. It was the Great Reunion of separated families. The event started on June 30, 1983 for celebration of 30-year anniversary of Korean War. Korean people have share very painful history of modern times that comes from experiences of Japanese colony and division of Korean land/nation by ideological opposition that rooted in the divided occupations of the land by the U.S. Army and the Soviet Russian Army. Many Korean people have lost their family or departed each other during colonial time through Korean War. During colonial time many men had been asked for compulsory military service and conscripted to many Japanese battlefields in East and South Asian countries or rear bases in Japan. At the same time many young women had been conscripted as sexual slaves for Japanese army. After World War 2 many of them could not return their hometown and had not been heard to their family. In addition Korean War produced a big number of departed

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families most of whom had lived departed each other in cities in South Korea until 1983 and even in North Korea. Most of them had not had any communication until then.

The event was very successful in providing many departed people with special connections to check each other's life and death or to meet again. The event has been televised for 138 days 453 hours and 45 minutes from June 30, 1983 to November 14, 1983 and 53,536 stories and requests of departed families were produced among total 100,952 families applied to be televised. As a result the 10,189 people had gotten re-union with their departed family. It was the biggest program for looking for departed family by using television network in the world. As a result the program was awarded for the most humanistic program in 1983 given by the 6th World Congress of Journalists and won the Gold Mercury Award for the contribution of World Peace in 1984.

In addition the open square where used to be in front of KBS on Yoeui Island in the middle of River Han which flowed through the Seoul City supplied the good place to the very families and other people who had much interest. Influence of the event was so huge that many foreign journalism and broadcasting services had reported to each of their countries. Most Korean people have believed that even though the pain and trauma from Japanese ruling and Korean War have been so deep, but they sought much comfort and peace by the event. That event has connected all the Korean people's heart together.

In 1997, Korean Government required International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a relief loan in order to avoid the sovereign default that could have come depending to series of nonpayment of many companies and as the result a rapid decrease of foreign-exchange reserve. It was a crisis to Korean people as well as Korean Government. The Government received 19.5 billion USD as a relief loan from IMF and at the same time Korean economy situation suddenly got worse. Many of Korean people responded the crisis with a very special activity which was gathering gold kept in every home in order to secure as much more foreign exchange as possible. This movement proposed by a minister of a Protestant church, as a result, gathered 227 metered tons of

gold from 2.43 million people. This is believed to help Korean Government pay back the loan earlier and thus recovered soon the normal economy. The movement made the people be of one mind. Seoul city was the center for unfolding the movement by supplying many official buildings as the spaces for gathering people and televising of the phenomena not only to the whole country but to the world.

In 2002, FIFA World Cup Games was held in Korea by Korea and Japan co-hosts. During the games the plaza in front of Seoul City Hall used to be an open space where hundreds of thousands people had frequently gathered in swarms. The crowd watched televised soccer games and cheered for Korean team's victory. The crowds there had been joined together regardless of age or gender. But after then this plaza used to be an open spaces for another kind of crowds who practiced antigovernment rallies or collective demonstrations of special political or social attitudes and thus to be changed to a space of physical conflicts between crowds and helmeted police. In these cases the plaza were fields of demagogues and extreme conflicts.

In 2010s people's lives in Seoul City have changed from a simple nationality of Korean people to plural in nationality and culture in comparison to 1990s. This means foreign people from many other countries joined in the city lives with their own cultural backgrounds and even many North Koreans settled in the city as new citizen. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of Korean Government has established a policy of multicultural family assistance and Seoul City Government and its borough offices have been carrying out the policy. Multicultural family indicates the family that consists of Korean and foreigner. And North Korean people who settled in South Korea have increased more than in 1990s and the Ministry of Unification of Korean Government has a policy to support them settle in Korea and Seoul city and its borough offices have carried out the policy.

In addition lots of new construction have been going on in Seoul city and some of them recovered original shape of the Joseon Dynasty and others are adding new shape to the city. Rebuilding of the city wall and uncovering of covered Cheonggye river that flows to River Han are the best examples of the



former. The city wall that was established for defense of the capital at the early time of the Joseon Dynasty but many parts of it were destroyed by Japanese Government General during the colonial era. But now the wall is almost recovered to its original. The Cheong-gye river flows the middle of the city but in 1960s to 1970s has gradually been covered to widen the network of road in the city and after then a long overpass was built on the covered road. The roads over the river looked necessary at the time of industrialization for mass transit. However in 2000s it has been recognized as one of causes of serious air pollution of the city and counted as a vulnerable area of the city environment. Finally the covered roads have totally been removed in 2003 and now citizen can walk along the both sides of the river. And this has refreshed the appearance of the center of the city.

The other case is Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) recently built in 2014. DDP is another abbreviation of “Dream, Design, Pla”. The location of DDP was the place of a sports complex close to the East Gate of the Seoul City Wall. The sports complex has been removed and DDP located there. It was designed for a complex of Art conference, multi purpose convention hall, design exhibition, design museum, design lab, design experience, design market, gallery, performance, Dongdaemun History & Culture Park, and so on. The DDP is designed by Iraqi British architect Zaha Hadid. The DDP shows a very fresh appearance but is enough to gather people each of who has various interests in history, art, or design. It seems to add a fresh tonic to the modernized Seoul city with its special appearance and open spaces. This is believed to indicate one of directions that the city can choose for its future.

#### 4. Discussion

Seoul City incubates more potential than what are talked above. If we focus on the open city, Seoul city has shown much possibility of it because various activities have had successful results in communications among citizen or between government and citizen. And its efforts to shift from a modern city to a future city are so active. And Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Korean Government announced “Prosperity of Culture in Korea”

as its top main policy and Seoul City is the most important station of the policy. But it should be discussed that what content or value of culture will be necessary for the prosperity. Additionally what brings Seoul City to an open city should be a good question for our further study.